



Quick Reads

Thomas Newton, MPP, REHS
Director, Iowa Department of Public Health

May 8, 2008

Confirmation as director

I'm pleased to inform you the [Iowa Senate](#) confirmed my nomination as Director of the Iowa Department of Public Health on April 24. Thank you to everyone who offered their support and words of encouragement throughout this process. With this chapter now complete, I now look forward more than ever to the challenges that lie ahead for me as director and for public health in Iowa. It is time to dedicate ourselves to the public health priorities that face our communities and the state as a whole. I hope that you will join with me in working to improve the health of the citizens of Iowa.

First appointments made to Plumbing and Mechanical Systems Examining Board

[Governor Culver](#) recently announced a significant development in the licensing of plumbers and related professionals throughout the state—the appointment of the first [members](#) of the Plumbing and Mechanical Systems Examining Board. The board is established to test and license plumbing, HVAC, refrigeration and hydronic professionals throughout the state.

Gubernatorial appointees include: a plumbing inspector; a mechanical inspector; a rural contractor; a journeyman plumber; a plumbing contractor/master plumber; two mechanical professional journeymen; a master mechanical professional; and a master mechanical professional/contractor. Representatives from IDPH and the [Department of Public Safety](#) also sit on the board. For more information about the board, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/plumbing.asp.

STIPDA recognizes Iowans

At the 2008 annual meeting of the [State and Territorial Injury Prevention Directors Association](#) (STIPDA), two Iowans received awards for their contributions and commitment to the field of injury and violence prevention. Binnie LeHew, Chief of the IDPH [Bureau of Disability and Violence Prevention](#), was recognized as a "Rising Star" for her efforts to expand Iowa's injury prevention capacity by implementing recommendations from a technical assistance report. In addition, she has helped build collaborations between other national and state injury prevention partners. John Lundell, Deputy Director for the [University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center](#), was also recognized for his outstanding efforts to support injury and violence prevention research, policy, and practice.

Iowa Disease Surveillance System (IDSS) update

The [Iowa Disease Surveillance System](#) (IDSS) project continues to move forward. The system is being designed to streamline communication among hospitals, laboratories, and public health agencies involved with infectious disease surveillance by integrating electronic laboratory reporting from the University Hygienic Laboratory and automated alerting through the Health Alert Network (HAN).

The [Iowa Foundation for Medical Care](#) is currently in Phase II development, which will continue through the end of June 2008. Statewide implementation is scheduled to occur in stages beginning this July in the more populous areas of the state, with full implementation by October. For Phase III, IDPH is working with contract staff to integrate electronic laboratory reporting from University Hygienic Laboratory into IDSS and enhance the system reports. In addition, enhanced features are being developed to provide more flexibility with the integration of the Health Alert Network and IDSS. For more information or questions about IDSS, contact John Satre at 515-242-5090 or jsatre@idph.state.ia.us.

Iowa and Missouri hold exercise to protect newborns

The [University Hygienic Laboratory](#) (UHL) and the [Missouri State Public Health Laboratory](#) recently held an exercise to plan for contingencies should a disruption in one of the states' newborn-testing programs occur. Earlier this year, the two labs refined an agreement to serve as each other's backup should their ability to provide this potentially life-saving screening be interrupted due to a natural disaster (flooding, tornado, ice storm), a pandemic, or a man-made interruption (fire, etc.). Iowa and Missouri used the [Emergency Management Assistance Compact](#) (EMAC) to carry out the agreement as well as the scenario for the recent drill.

This partnership is a significant development for public health in Iowa and Missouri. No one knows that better than the dedicated professionals at the UHL who came to

the aid of the State of Louisiana by screening babies born in that state following hurricane Katrina. During the 26 months UHL provided this service, 1,395 potentially fatal and debilitating conditions were identified, thereby saving the lives and improving the quality of life for so many Louisianans and their families. Thank you to UHL and the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory for helping prepare public health in our states to perform at their best when conditions may be at their worst.

HIV/AIDS Conference, June 3 & 4

The Iowa Department of Public Health, the [Iowa Department of Education](#) and the [HIV Community Planning Group](#) will be hosting the [10th HIV/AIDS Conference](#), June 3 & 4 in Des Moines. Themed "Unity and Diversity: The Challenge for Change," topics will cover emerging HIV/HCV/STD trends and strategies for addressing these trends.

Featured speakers include Dr. Mindy Thompson-Fullilove, a research psychiatrist at [New York State Psychiatric Institute](#) and a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at [Columbia University](#). Thompson-Fullilove has conducted research on AIDS and other epidemics of poor communities, with a special interest in the relationship between the collapse of communities and decline in health. Another featured speaker will be Rev. Edwin Sanders, II, a senior servant and founder of the [Metropolitan Interdenominational Church](#) in Nashville, TN. Metropolitan has outreach ministries in the areas of substance abuse, advocacy for children, sexual violence, and harm reduction, and provides services to persons infected with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS through the First Response Center, which Reverend Sanders founded in 1992. To register visit, www.trainingresources.org.

ICOST Conference, June 28 – July 2

Iowa State University in Ames will be the site of the 2008 [International Conference on Smart Homes and Health Telematics](#) (ICOST). Scheduled for June 28 to July 2, this year's theme is *Gerontechnology: Enhancing the Quality of Life for Rural Elders*. The focus will be on extending the quality of life of people with disabilities and the elderly in rural areas by using "smart homes" and smart assistive technology. A smart home is a home that has been modified to meet the specific needs of the dweller, not only enhancing their ability to complete daily living tasks, but also engage in social and leisure activities.

The IDPH Office of Disability and Health will participate in the conference through sponsorship of certain activities during the five-day event. For more information or to register, visit www.cs.iastate.edu/~icost.

State Board of Health meets May 14

The next [State Board of Health](#) meeting is May 14. The agenda is posted at www.idph.state.ia.us/do/board_of_health.asp. To view the minutes of previous meetings, please open the appropriate agenda and click on “Minutes” near the top of the page.

We want your best practices

IDPH is committed to telling the citizens of Iowa about the good things public health is doing to make a difference. To do this, we want to highlight your best practices/success stories. Please send your ideas to Don McCormick at dmccormi@idph.state.ia.us.

To everyone in public health and all our partners—keep up the great work!
Tom